

## COUNCIL

Minutes of the one hundred and twenty-second meeting of Council held on Wednesday 28 September 2016 at 10.00 am in Room 115, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, CCEA HQ, 29 Clarendon Road, Belfast, BT1 3BG.

**Present:**

Mr T Carson (Chair)	Mr J Wilkinson
Ms M Crilly	Mr M Donnelly
Mrs C Harpur	Mrs R Cowan
Dr L Caul	Mr R Thompson
Mr T Armstrong	Mrs J Mussen
Dr N Morton	Mrs K O'Hare
Dr A Kerr	

Mr J Edwards (Chief Executive)  
Mr R Hanna (Director of Education Strategy)  
Mrs S McClelland (Interim Director of Corporate Services)  
Mr J Daly (Financial Services Manager)  
Mr R McCune (Regulation & Accreditation Manager : Items 1 – 6 and Item 8 only)

Miss N Kennedy (Manager, Council Secretariat)

### Introduction

The Chair welcomed members and officers to the meeting.

#### *Outgoing Council Members*

The Chair paid tribute to outgoing Council members Ms Michele Crilly and Mr John Wilkinson who joined the Council in April 2006. He thanked them, on behalf of colleagues, for their extensive service to Council, the Audit & Risk Assurance, Education and Finance Committees and for their invaluable support, expertise and contributions to the work of the organisation.

Mr Wilkinson wished to place on record his thanks to the Chair and Council colleagues. He welcomed the opportunities afforded him as Council and Committee member to engage with professionals in the education system and wished CCEA well for the future.

Ms Crilly thanked members for their kind comments and wished CCEA well for the challenges ahead.

#### *Retirement of Director of Qualifications*

The Chair paid tribute to Ms Anne Marie Duffy, Director of Qualifications, who was retiring from CCEA on 30 September 2016. He wished to place on record, his thanks, on behalf of Council to Ms Duffy for her dedicated service to CCEA over a period of 16 years and for the highly professional way she led the Qualifications Directorate.

Members recognised the way in which the introduction of additional procedures and quality assurance checks had contributed to successful examinations series and thanked Ms Duffy and her staff for the substantial amount of work carried out to continuously improve CCEA's services to candidates and centres.

## **1 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Mrs AM Duffy; Dr P Cunningham

## **2 Declaration of Interests**

Members confirmed there were no conflicts of interests for any of the agenda items.

The Head of Regulation identified a possible conflict with paper C/122/1 : General Conditions of Recognition.

## **3 Chair's Business**

The Chair, on behalf of Council, wished to place on record condolences to Ms Amanda Swann, Business Manager, Qualifications, on her recent bereavement.

### *Tabled Papers*

The Chair drew attention to the various papers tabled for members' information.

### *Closed Session of Council*

The Chair reminded members that a closed session would be held at the end of normal Council business.

### *Additional Meeting of Finance Committee and Council : Wednesday 12 October 2016*

The Chair referred to the correspondence received from DE commissioning an exercise to investigate and set out all potential savings proposals which could impact on the Budget for 2017/18 with a deadline of 14 October. He confirmed that to ensure the appropriate governance and approvals processes were followed additional meetings of Finance Committee and Council had been arranged for Wednesday 12 October 2016. He thanked members for responding to this request.

### **Chair's Report**

The Chair reported on a range of activities since the last meeting. These included :

- Meeting with Minister Weir: 20 July 2016. Mr John Wilkinson and Mrs Christine Harpur accompanied the Chair to the meeting. A summary of the range of matters discussed was provided.

Mr Wilkinson confirmed that the Minister was supportive of the work of CCEA and recognised the high standard that continued to be achieved. This reassurance was welcomed by members.

- Minister's Visit to CCEA : The Minister would visit CCEA and meet staff and Council members on Wednesday 14 December 2016.

- Celebrating Excellence Event : the Minister has agreed to host and attend the Event on the evening of 14 December in the Long Gallery, Stormont Buildings.

Invitations to Council will issue in due course.

- Council Members' Recruitment: members noted that interviews would take place during October. An update would be provided at the December meeting.
- Council Development Day: the Chair thanked members and the Chief Executive for their contributions to the development session held on 7 September. It was agreed that electronic copies of the presentations would be circulated to members.
- Meeting with and correspondence to Permanent Secretary : the Chair confirmed he had met with the Permanent Secretary on 27 September to discuss the correspondence regarding the Savings Proposals for 2017/18. He confirmed he had also written to the Permanent Secretary about this issue and had received an assurance that all large ALBs were being tasked with similar exercises. .

A Council member sought and received confirmation that the Permanent Secretary would retire at the end of the calendar year. No further information was available.

- Meetings with Chief Executive : the Chair confirmed that he continued to meet with the Chief Executive to monitor effectiveness and seek assurances on the operations of the organisation. He confirmed that, because of the interim management arrangements and additional line management responsibilities with regards to the Qualifications directorate, he would now aim to meet the Chief Executive on a weekly basis.

#### *Committee Terms of Reference*

It was confirmed that the Education and Regulatory Advisory Committee Terms of Reference (ToR) had been reviewed by the relevant Chairs and Chief Executive to reflect the change in responsibilities.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Education Committee would be on the agenda for the 5 October meeting and subsequently go forward to Council for information.

The Chair advised that, the Terms of Reference (ToR) for Finance and Audit & Risk Assurance Committees would be reviewed in line with good practice.

#### ***Chief Executive's Report***

##### *External*

The Chief Executive reported on the following (not covered in the written document).

*Assembly Education Committee* : The Chief Executive attended the Education Committee of the Assembly on 21 September. He confirmed that far reaching and extensive questions were asked on a wide range of matters including: Computer Based Assessment; Qualifications; Outcomes of the 2016 Summer Series and the Transfer Test.

The Committee wrote to thank the Chief Executive for a constructive discussion.

*JCQ Board Meeting : 9 September 2016* : The Chief Executive confirmed that the Minister attended the JCQ Board Meeting, held in CCEA HQ on Friday 9 September. He confirmed he met with the Minister to discuss CCEA's regulatory role and other related matters.

The Chief Executive continues to meet with representatives from JCQ on matters of mutual interest including the Entitlement Framework and the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

*Department of the Economy* : the DoE Grade 3 met with the Chief Executive and Head of Regulation to seek advice in regards to qualifications for the new Apprenticeships Strategy and Youth Training Strategy.

#### *Internal*

The Chief Executive drew attention to the detail provided in the report (previously circulated to members and provided a brief overview in relation to :

#### *Education Strategy*

- CBA : 233 schools participating in the CBA for autumn 2016, with over 20,000 literacy and numeracy assessments completed by Year 4 and Year 7 pupils to date.
- CBA Futures Report : is being considered by the Minister. No response has been received to date.

#### *Qualifications*

GCSE results were issued successfully to candidates on Thursday 18 August and GCSE results on Thursday 25 August. The Chief Executive was pleased to report that outcomes have been maintained at GCE and GCSE.

Members were assured that the minor issues had been dealt with satisfactorily with no impact on candidates. An action plan has been put in place and is being monitored by the Chief Executive.

#### *Regulation*

CCEA now has responsibility for the regulation of all qualifications taken in Northern Ireland. The team continues to work with the Department for the Economy (DoE) to develop regulation procedures and support the DoE Apprenticeship and Traineeship programmes.

#### *Revision of Specifications*

Accreditation of GCE A Level and AS Level specifications is complete. The process for GCSE qualifications is on schedule.

#### *Corporate Services*

- Estates Strategy has been considered and agreed.
- Draft Digital Strategy : approved for wider consultation

- Sickness absence trends have improved and interventions together with more robust management of back to work interviews are working well. The current rate is below 8 days.

Members were content with the information provided.

#### *FOI Requests*

Members noted the most recent FOI requests.

#### **4 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 29 June 2016**

With the inclusion of the date for the feedback meeting (23 June 2016) on page 7, the minutes of the previous meeting held on 29 June 2016 were proposed by Mr John Wilkinson and seconded by Ms Michele Crilly as a true and accurate record. A copy was signed by the Chair.

A Committee member expressed disappointment that despite approaches, there was insufficient representation on the Education Committee from the Primary Sector. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Chair would be writing out to co-opt members from the primary sector onto the committee. He recognised the importance of the Primary Sector being sufficiently represented.

#### *Action Points*

The following updates were provided :

- *Council Development Day Programmes* : the Chair confirmed that he would draft a paper setting out possible topics for programmes until June 2017. These would include effectiveness of Council and its committee structure; the appraisal system and skills sets.

A Council member suggested that more time be built in for reflection moving forwards.

- *Minister's Announcement on GCSE Grading* : on agenda for this meeting.
- *UK Decision to leave Europe – considerations for future CCEA business*: copy of information to be circulated to members.
- *Report on Fundamental Review of Qualifications*: the report was being considered by the Minister.

Members noted the status of the remaining actions.

#### **5 Correspondence**

Members noted the following correspondence:

- Commissioning of Advice on English Awarding Organisations' Science GCSE Specifications
- Re-allocation of Funds In-Year to the Aggregated Schools Budget
- CCEA's 2016/17 Business Plan
- 2016/17 Mid-Year Governance Statement (and guidance)
- Budget 2017/18 : Savings Proposals

A Council member expressed his concern in relation to additional work being requested from within current budget and the subsequent in-year reduction highlighted in the correspondence from DE on 24 August 2016.

Mr Neill Morton left the meeting at this point in proceedings.

## **6 Governance and Accountability**

*Minutes of the GAR Meeting held on 9 June 2016*

Members noted the information provided in the minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2016.

*Change in running order of Agenda*

The Chair advised that Item 8 : Regulation would be taken before Item 7 : Audit, as the Regulator had declared a potential conflict of interests.

## **8 Regulation**

***Draft Article : GCSE Mathematics Comparability***

***C/122/2***

The Chief Executive introduced the item and provided a brief overview of the background on the matter. He confirmed that members had asked for a contextualised article on the findings from a comparability study of CCEA GCSE Mathematics to be drafted for review and approval for publication.

Members discussed and sought clarification on a wide range of matters in regards to the paper. It was suggested that the article be re-drafted to ensure it is more accessible for a wide range of audiences with the headline issues and main messages at the start.

The Chair asked that the draft article be reviewed for further refinement and editing. He suggested that if members had any suggestions for consideration they should forward these to the Manager of the Secretariat outside of the meeting.

A revised draft would come forward to the next meeting of Council.

***GCSE Grading : Update on Process***

***C/122/3***

The Chief Executive reminded members of the Minister's Statement and decision on the new grading arrangements for GCSE in Northern Ireland. He confirmed that he had asked the Regulator to lead on the changes required.

The Head of Regulation provided an overview of the main areas under development, in particular, the drafting of a set of regulatory rules (in conjunction with the Awarding Organisation) by December 2016.

Clarification was sought on whether any direction had been received with regard to linear qualifications. It was confirmed that a consultation had taken place and the consensus was that there was no wish to return to linear therefore the modular system would remain in Northern

Ireland. The Chief Executive stated that any further changes should linear be re-introduced would present significant budgetary and technical challenges.

A Council member expressed concern that the Department had not sought advice of Council. The Chair advised that he also expressed concern about being kept informed on all matters pertaining to grading and confirmed he would continue to emphasise the Council's role in the provision of advice in the areas of Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment.

Members noted the information provided.

The Chair thanked the Head of Regulation for his input into the meeting.

## **7 Audit**

### *Audit Workshop*

The Chair of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee updated members on the content of recent Arms' Length Bodies (ALB) Audit Workshop for Chairs, Chief Executives and Committee Chairs, held on 27 September 2016. He advised that the main areas of discussion were :

- Whistleblowing
- Conflict of Interests
- Handling of Complaints

He commended the content of the workshop and confirmed a range of learning points which would benefit Council and members of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. It was suggested that links to the documentation be sourced for members.

### *General Conditions of Recognition (GCOR)*

The Chair of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee stated that as the committee had not met since June, members had been asked to review the GCOR documentation using the approved e-mail mechanism. He confirmed that members had fulfilled this requirement and recommended the papers to Council for final approval.

### **General Conditions of Recognition**

**C/122/1**

The Interim Director of Corporate Services (DoCS) drew attention to the detail of the documents provided and gave an overview of the process of self-assessment and compliance testing. She confirmed that the compliance testing had been undertaken by the internal auditors (ASM) and was pleased to report that no issues for improvement had been put forward.

A Council member thanked the DoCS and team for clarifying a number of queries in advance of the meeting.

Members commended the level of assurance provided by the internal audit report and were reassured that high standards were being maintained.

The CCEA Awarding Organisation Statements of Compliance were formally approved by Council for submission to the Regulators by 30 September 2016.

## 9 Education

### **Summer Examinations Series Report 2016**

**C/122/4**

The Chief Executive drew attention to paper C/122/4 and confirmed that the GCSE and GCE timetables had been completed with one minor error in a GCSE Spanish paper. He assured members that there had been no impact on the candidates and remedial action taken immediately.

- 100% of all results were provided to UCAS by 11 August 2016
- 100% of all results for both GCE and GCSE were provided to centres on time.

The Chief Executive was pleased to report significant improvements in CCEA provision of results service, with no issues of concern reported from the examinations helpline.

A comprehensive presentation (copy provided for members' information) on key aspects of the summer examinations series was provided. These included :

- GCE and GCSE Market Share
- GCE A2 and GCSE Entries (2012 – 2016)
- Issue of Results : Headlines which included : location analytics; grade performance (at GCE and GCSE) and information on most popular subjects in Northern Ireland.
- Improvements on Services to candidates
- Incidents of Malpractice
- Targets 2015 – Delivery 2016; and Targets for 2016/17

Trend data was provided on :

- Overall GCSE performance (NI) from 2006-2016
- GCSE Performance (by gender NI) from 2006 – 2016
- Language Entries – NI 2012 – 2016
- Mathematics Entries – NI 2010 – 2016
- STEM Subject Entries – NI 2012 – 2016
- GCE Stem Entries – NI 2007 – 2016

Members sought and received clarification on a number of matters and were satisfied with the explanations provided.

Ms Anne Marie Duffy joined the meeting at this point.

A Council member commended the detailed set of procedures pertaining to the way in which malpractice is handled within the organisation. It was confirmed that malpractice has categories of penalties depending on the severity of the case

The Chair, on behalf of Council, thanked the Chief Executive and his Executive Team, in particular, the Director of Qualifications and her teams for the significant amount of work undertaken to achieve this excellent performance.



Ms O'Hare also wished to place on record her personal thanks to Ms Anne Marie Duffy for the positive way in which she supported schools.

Ms Kathleen O'Hare left the meeting at this point.

The Chair wished to place on record, on behalf of Council, his thanks to Ms Duffy for the professionalism and leadership she has displayed in her role as Director of Qualifications and for the way in which she managed and support staff in her Directorate. He paid tribute to her dedication to visiting centres to ensure support was provided at the highest level.

## **10 Finance, Planning and Performance**

### ***Finance Committee Report : Meeting held on 22 September 2016***

The Chair of the Committee confirmed that members had fulfilled their scrutiny and challenge function on all items on the agenda. As the minutes of the meeting held on 22 September were not yet finalised a verbal report was provided on the following :

- Correspondence from DE: Budget 2017/18: Savings Proposals : already discussed. An additional meeting of Finance Committee arranged for 12 October to review and recommend proposals to Council.
- Finance Report as at 31 August 2016: members noted there was a slight underspend of 0.1% at this time. capital expenditure on track with no variance
- Corporate Plan - Monitoring Report : members discussed the report and were content with the information provided.

The above items were on the Council agenda for this meeting.

- Pay Remit 2016/17 and 2017/18 : members received an update on the current status of the pay remit and were content with progress made.
- Procurement and Business Case Update : 1 live procurement with Education Cope; 3 live procurements with CPD; and within Collaborative Procurement Activity - 3 procurements are currently being considered.

Members noted that a one-year extension to the SLA between CCEA and EA had been agreed until 31 July 2017.

- On-line marking contract expires on 30 November. A business case will be required for an extension. Approval from finance committee will be sought via the approved remote (e-mail) mechanism.
- 42 Business Cases were approved between June and August 2016.
- The revised post-project evaluation process has been successfully rolled out across the organisation.

- HR Report : members received an updated on progress with Sickness Absence Management and the Estates Strategy. A number of events and initiatives have been held for the Action Cancer Charity as part of CCEA's Corporate and Social Responsibility agenda.
- IIP Accreditation visits will take place during December 2016 and January 2017.
- Draft Digital Strategy : was considered and approved to go out for consultation.
- Flexible Working Hours Policy was approved by the committee.
- Values : a series of workshops facilitated by Deloitte were attended by 80% of staff across the organisation to contribute to discussions on what defines CCEA's Values. The feedback report would be presented to the committee as appropriate.

It was confirmed that the Values would be presented to Council for endorsement once finalised.

#### *Closed Session*

The Chair of the Committee confirmed that members discussed and were content with the short term interim management arrangements upon the departure of the Director of Qualifications. An update on the restructure of the top management team was also received.

Members noted the information provided.

#### ***Finance Report as at 31 August 2016***

***C/122/5***

The Chair of Council confirmed that the detailed finance reports had been thoroughly investigated by the Finance Committee at its meeting on 22 September.

The Financial Services Manager (FM) drew attention to the detail of paper C/122/5 and updated member son the following :

- Internal review of pressures and easements commissioned by the Chief Executive
- In-year budget reduction of £500K
- October monitoring

Members sought and received clarification on a number of matters and were content with the explanations provided.

#### ***Statement of Financial Position as at 31 August 2016***

***C/122/6***

Members noted the information received.

The Interim Director of Corporate Services (DoCS) drew attention to paper FC/32/4 and advised that 67 out of 68 objectives were on target. She confirmed that monitoring of the objectives continued and the process was working successfully.

Members commended this performance.

*Mrs Rosemary Cowan left the meeting at this point.*

**PEST Analysis : Chief Executive's Analysis of the CCEA Strategic Environment**

The Chair introduced this item and drew attention to the presentation tabled for members' information.

The Chief Executive summarised the key issues for CCEA moving forwards, in particular, the identification of savings proposals for 2017/18. He assured members that CCEA's statutory responsibilities together with DE and Ministerial priorities would be kept at the forefront of his thinking. CCEA would continue to maintain public confidence in all areas of its work.

He gave a detailed presentation which included :

- Political direction
- Economic environment
- Social environment
- Technology

He confirmed that CCEA had delivered a robust digital service in modernisation and in continuing to do so data security would be paramount when upgrading and introducing new systems.

The Chair, on behalf of Council, thanked the Chief Executive for this overview.

**11 Any Other Business**

None identified.

**12 Date of next meeting**

The Chair confirmed that the next meeting would take place on **Wednesday 14 December 2016 at 10 am**. He confirmed the Minister of Education would be visiting CCEA to meet a range of staff and Council members and that further details on the format of the morning would be issued in due course.

He thanked members and officers for their contributions to the meeting.